

BOSTON COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

Sources of Financial Support for Ph.D. Students

Director of Graduate Studies

January 2023

This document summarizes the sources of financial support available to graduate students in the Boston College Department of Economics. As “satisfactory progress” is a necessary condition for receiving any form of aid from the Department, students are advised to refer to the definition of that term in the Department’s rules and regulations. These can be found in the document *Ph.D. Program: Academic Policies and Procedures*, available online at the Department’s web site.

Students in the first through fourth years who meet the Department’s “satisfactory progress” standard appropriate to that year automatically receive what this document labels a “Standard Aid Package” for the following year of graduate study. The standard packages are described in Section 1. The remaining sections provide descriptions of alternative and supplemental sources of aid available to graduate students. Eligibility criteria, deadlines, application procedures, approximate aid/compensation levels, and restrictions (if any) are defined for each program.

## 1 STANDARD AID PACKAGE

**Description:** The standard aid package consists of (i) an academic year stipend in an amount determined by the MCAS Graduate School and (ii) tuition remission credits for a full course load during the academic year. Each student receiving a standard aid package is required to perform some form of academic service in exchange for the stipend. First and second-year students serve as Graduate Assistants (GA) for the academic year. Their obligation is not to exceed 10 hours of work per week. Third, fourth and fifth-year students typically work as Teaching Assistants (TA) in Principles and Statistics classes or Statistics and Econometrics labs. Some fourth or fifth-year students serve as a Teaching Fellow (TF), typically teaching two sections each semester of Statistics, Econometric Methods or

Intermediate Theory.

**Award Process:** Students meeting the satisfactory progress criteria automatically receive the standard aid package.

**Eligibility:** All students meeting satisfactory progress criteria as defined in the Department's Academic Policies and Procedures.

**Stipend:** Determined by the MCAS Graduate School.

## 2 SUPPORT BEYOND THE FIFTH YEAR

Students in the sixth, seventh or eighth years of the program who are making satisfactory progress toward completion, as determined by the Director of Graduate Studies, will be awarded tuition remission for Doctoral Continuation fees for fall and spring semesters. Those students who were enrolled during the pandemic will receive tuition remission for their ninth year.

## 3 SUMMER SUPPORT FOR FIRST- AND SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS

**Description:** This program is funded by a combination of Department sources. Students receiving the award are expected to serve as research assistants (RA) to a faculty member for a predetermined number of hours during the summer.

**Award Process:** At the beginning of the spring semester, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) determines the amount of money that is available for summer support for graduate students completing their first or second year of study and making satisfactory progress. The total amount of available funds varies from year to year. The award level for summer 2023 is \$3,000 and requires five full-time equivalent weeks of research assistance over the summer.

In early February, all faculty are invited to submit a brief one-paragraph description of a research project that would require RA support during the upcoming summer. The eligible students review the faculty projects and meet with the faculty whose projects are of interest to them. Then the students submit a rank order of the faculty projects according to their interest and the faculty submit a rank order of the eligible students. An efficient computer algorithm then assigns students to faculty based on the two rank orderings.

Note: the number of summer awards most likely will be less than the number of eligible students (i.e., those making satisfactory progress).

**Eligibility:**

1. Student must be a member of the first or second-year class.
2. Student must be making satisfactory progress.

**Stipend:** The award amount is determined by the DGS.

**Restrictions:** None. Students may seek other forms of employment during the summer months.

## 4 DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS: ACADEMIC YEAR AWARDS

**Description:** The MCAS Graduate School provides one full-time equivalent academic year dissertation award to the Department each year. The award is split (one semester each) between two students. The students receiving the fellowships have no GA, TA, or TF responsibilities during the term of their awards. They are, however, expected to work full time on their dissertations during the award period. The objective of the program is to expedite completion of the dissertation by the end of the student's fifth year.

**Award Process:** In February of each year a memo is sent to all third and fourth-year students informing them of the fellowship opportunity, eligibility criteria, and application deadline (usually the week following the March spring break). Once applications are received, the DGS appoints a review committee composed of three faculty members. The committee makes a formal recommendation to the DGS, who notifies students as soon as the graduate school makes official its awards. This usually occurs in late March.

**Eligibility:**

1. Student must be a member of the third or fourth-year class.
2. Student must be making satisfactory progress toward the Ph.D. degree.
3. Student must file an approved thesis proposal or, if a third-year student, a 2–3 page approved thesis abstract.
4. All students must have endorsing statements from at least two faculty members.
5. Student must submit a completed application for the award.

**Stipend:** The stipend for 2022-23 is \$27,500 (annual rate).

**Restrictions:** Students granted fellowships cannot accept any other form of support not directly linked to their dissertation research during the term of their award. For example, they may not accept teaching appointments or serve as an RA on projects not directly related to their theses. However, fellowship winners may apply for any form of support during the summer months, including a summer dissertation fellowship and other sources of summer support listed in this document. A summer dissertation fellowship award will not be made to those individuals receiving academic-year fellowships in the following academic year. Award recipients are also expected to be in full-time residence at Boston College during the term of their fellowship unless specifically exempted by the Director of Graduate Studies.

## 5 DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIPS: SUMMER AWARDS

**Description:** The Department offers a few summer dissertation awards to students completing their third or fourth years. The number of awards depends on available funding but can be expected to vary between 3 and 5. The awards are financed by a number of development funds donated by benefactors to the Department. Students receiving the summer dissertation fellowships have no GA, TA, or TF responsibilities during the term of their awards.

**Award Process:** The procedure is identical to that described above for the academic year dissertation fellowship. Students are notified of the opportunity in February in the same memo that announces the academic year fellowship. The application deadline also is the same (usually the week following the March spring break). The committee evaluating academic year dissertation fellowships also makes decisions regarding summer dissertation fellowships.

**Eligibility:** Same as for academic year dissertation fellowships.

**Stipend:** Set by the DGS. The stipend for summer 2022 awards was \$4,000.

**Restrictions:** None. Students may seek other forms of employment during the summer months.

## 6 TEACHING POSITIONS: BC SUMMER SESSIONS

**Description:** The director of the Woods College summer school program asks the Director of Graduate Studies, typically in December, to name nominate graduate students to teach one or two online courses each in the upcoming summer program. These courses may be Principles of Economics, Statistics, or higher-level electives.

**Selection Process:** The chair circulates a memo to current fourth, fifth and sixth-year students soliciting interest. The courses to be offered and their dates (i.e., first or second summer session) are identified. Interested students respond directly to the Chair.

**Eligibility:**

1. Applicants must be members of the fourth, fifth or higher-year classes.
2. Applicants must be meeting the department's requirements for satisfactory progress.

**Compensation:** Compensation is determined by the director of the summer program. It is \$8,015 per course (pre-tax) for the summer 2023 session.

**Restrictions:** None. Students may seek other forms of employment during the summer months.

## 7 TEACHING POSITIONS BEYOND THE FIFTH YEAR

Undergraduate enrollments in recent years have required the Department to augment the TA and TF staff by hiring 6th+ year students who are no longer eligible for the Standard Aid Package. The number of positions is dependent on the size of the PhD program and the level of enrollments, and may vary considerably from year to year. Students should not depend on the availability of these positions.

The Department will fill these positions from the set of 6th+ year students who have clearly demonstrated teaching skills as a TF/TA. Within that group, the Department will give higher priority to hiring those students who are clearly demonstrating progress toward completion of the dissertation according to their committee members.

## 8 MATH REVIEW SESSION FOR INCOMING GRADUATE STUDENTS

**Description:** This two-week session is held just before the start of classes in late August. Two graduate students run the session. It has been Department practice to assign instructors for a rolling two-year term. One new instructor is assigned in each year, thereby assuring that at least one of the two students has had a year of experience.

**Selection Process:** The DGS selects the math review teachers in mid-April in consultation with the professors teaching in the first-year graduate program.

**Eligibility:**

1. The expectation is that students who teach this class are beginning their second or third years in the program.
2. They must be meeting the Department's satisfactory progress standard.
3. They must be recommended by one or more professors in the first-year program.

**Compensation:** The amount is set by the Dean. The compensation will be \$2,000 per instructor for the summer 2023 session.

**Restrictions:** None. Students may seek other forms of employment during the summer months.

## 9 TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

**Description:** The MCAS Graduate School annually awards Donald J. White Teaching Excellence Awards. Starting in 2018, two awards will be made to Economics Teaching Fellows and three awards will be made to Economics Teaching Assistants.

**Award Process:** The DGS circulates a memo among graduate students in early February notifying them of the award opportunity, application requirements, and the deadline (usually in the week following the March spring break). Students who apply are evaluated by a committee of three faculty appointed by the DGS. The committee recognizes and takes into account the differing degrees of difficulty in receiving strong student evaluations in Principles and Statistics courses.

**Eligibility:**

1. Students must be a TA or TF during the current academic year.
2. Students must submit a fully completed application by the announced deadline.

**Honorarium:** Determined by the MCAS Graduate School. The awards were \$600 (TF) and \$350 (TA) in 2016–2017. The award is noted on a certificate presented at a university ceremony in April and becomes part of the student’s permanent academic record.

**Restrictions:** None.

## 10 RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS ON FACULTY GRANTS

**Description:** Individual faculty members having external grants may need research assistants to work on funded projects. The faculty may select an RA from members of any class, including the first-year class. Students in years two through five must be making satisfactory progress. Students offered and accepting such RA positions are still eligible for tuition remission in years one through six..

**Selection Process:** There is no procedure specified by the Department. Faculty holding grants usually review students’ files and make inquiries to professors teaching graduate courses. Subject to the conditions identified above, the faculty are free to hire whomever they prefer.

**Eligibility:** Students must be making satisfactory progress toward the Ph.D. degree.

**Compensation:** Determined either by the terms of the grant or by the equivalent stipend level of members of the student’s class.

**Restrictions:** Students holding these RA positions may not hold an academic year dissertation fellowship during concurrent periods. Similarly, they may not hold concurrent Departmental GA, TA or TF positions. If the term of their research assistantship extends into the summer, students may not apply for any form of Departmental summer support with the exception of the summer dissertation fellowship.

## 11 SUPPORT FOR CONFERENCE TRAVEL

**Description:** Graduate students presenting papers at conferences may apply for partial reimbursement of their travel expenses from the MCAS Graduate School. The Graduate School can provide up to \$350 once per fiscal year (June 1–May 31). Consult the following website for information on the application and reimbursement process and the current reimbursement amounts:

<http://www.bc.edu/schools/gsas/currentstudents/conference.html>

Note that you must receive approval for reimbursement from Dean Candace Hetzner of the Graduate School prior to attending the conference. Once you have filled out the Conference Participants Form and the Graduate School approves, you will get an e-mail, which you must keep for your records.

The Department may be able to supplement Graduate School funds, or provide funds when Graduate School funds have been exhausted: up to \$250 for presentation at a US conference and up to \$500 for presentation at an international conference. Please contact the DGS to apply.

When you have prepaid your expenses and when you are traveling and attending the conference, please keep all original receipts, original boarding passes for air, train, bus and the conference program with your name and presentation title. Meals will not be reimbursed. Make sure that your name and the method of payment is on every original receipt and if payment is by credit/debit card, please be sure that your name and the last four digits of your credit/debit card are on the receipt. If the receipt does not provide this info, you will have to submit your credit/debit card statement with your name and number on it, highlighting the expenses, and, please block out your credit/debit card number except the last four digits.

When you are ready to submit your receipts for reimbursement, please print out the BC Grad Student Expense Report, fill out the top and middle using your receipts and if it is an international conference, please use the historical exchange rates (use the dates you traveled or prepaid an expense) on <http://www.oanda.com> to convert to US dollars. If your credit/debit card converts foreign currency, that is acceptable. Leave the bottom totals blank and sign and date the expense report.

Submit the report to the graduate Administrative Assistant along with approval e-mails from the Graduate School and/or DGS. Scanned reports and receipts will not be accepted. If you know that there will be two funding sources, do not split your report: it must be one report with original receipts attached. When all is approved through the administrative channels, you can expect your reimbursement to be direct deposited into the US bank you have on file (allow up to three weeks).



## 12 DATA ACQUISITION

**Description:** Ph.D. students anticipating the need to pay for data necessary to their Ph.D. dissertation can seek financial support from three sources. First, they should consult members of their thesis committee who may be willing to submit a “Small Research Grant” application requesting data support directly to the MCAS Graduate School. Second, the students should consult the Business/Economics Research Librarian in O’Neill Library (currently Jason Hall) to determine whether the library would be interested in purchasing the data for general library use. This second option may be fruitful if and only if the case can be made that some significant part of the B.C. community would find the data useful. A third option, should the first two fail to provide the necessary funds, is to apply to the DGS for limited support from one of our Development funds, subject to budget constraints.

## 13 TUITION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS COURSES

**Description:** Boston College offers one English Language Learners course each semester for foreign graduate students who wish to improve their facility with spoken and written English. We encourage all our students to apply who feel that their English language skills would benefit from additional support. A number of our students have benefited from the courses in the past.

**Selection Process:** Interested students receive an assessment from the Instructor of the course at the beginning of the school year to determine whether the course is suitable for them.

**Eligibility:** Any graduate student enrolled in the Ph.D. program except those entering their sixth year or beyond.

**Award Level:** The course is free to our students.

**Restrictions:** None.

## 14 DEPARTMENT POLICY IN AWARDING SUPPLEMENTAL AID

Unless explicitly noted above in the “Restrictions” sections, students receiving any of the supplemental sources of financial support identified in this document may apply for and be granted multiple sources of support. However, it is the Department’s policy that, other things equal, we will attempt to distribute financial support opportunities over as many of its eligible graduate students as possible.

## 15 AUTHORITY

Any questions regarding the interpretation of any rules, procedures or guidelines announced in this document should be addressed to the Director of Graduate Studies.